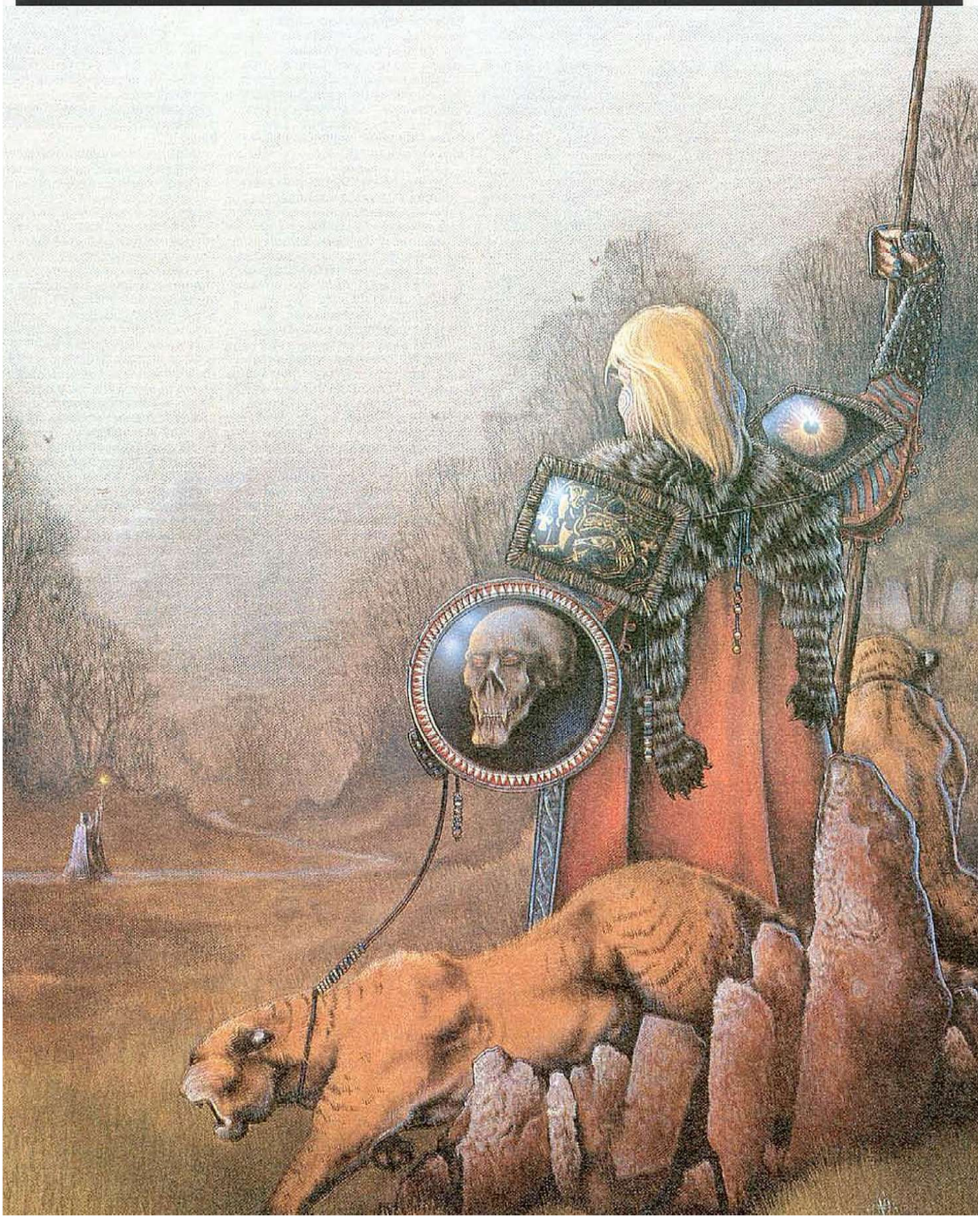
THE DARK USURPER

Fighting Fantasy Solo Adventure by Jon Sutherland with Gareth Hill



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In order to play this *Fighting Fantasy* solo game, you will need to either know the rules or have access to a *Fighting Fantasy* game book. Also you require a pencil, rubber and two six-sided dice.

INTRODUCTION

You are Corwin Calbraith, adventurer, knight, son of Cormac, Duke of Skeln and a prisoner!

For the past three years you have fought at the side of your King striving to wrestle the Holy Chalice from the clutches of the heathen. The King lies wounded and exhausted, his coffers empty and his followers dispirited and scattered. His dream in tatters, the chalice must wait for deliverance.

You left your lands supremely confident that your friend Evald Senskell would protect and administer them in accordance with your wishes. Three months ago you returned home. Your lands seemed strangely silent, your people sullen and oddly inconspicous. As your retinue dwindled, tales of black clad troopers rounding up all those who opposed the new Duke of Skeln began to alarm you. Speeding to your hilltop castle you find strange grey creatures there to greet you. Realising that resistance was useless, they escort you to a cell at the top of the highest tower in the fortress.

There you have languished, confused and bewildered.

You must escape to free your lands and people; as days go by you grow weaker and must therefore act with all speed. Go to **1**.

1: As you lie on your rough bed in the unlit cell, your mind ponders over the possibilities as to how you can escape, you have no weapons or armour, nor coins with which to bribe the guards. A routine has been established, a single guard comes up through the trap door in the floor at daybreak and night fall with not too appetising food and a very cheap bitter wine.
You have three options:

Do you attempt to overpower the guard on his next visit, turn to **67**.

Do you begin to knot together your bedding in the hope that it will reach a lower window, go to **48**.

Or do you start to prise up the wooden planks of the floor of the cell, turn to **91**.

2: In your precipitous run you startle the horses, the racket could be heard a mile away. Do you run, go to **41** or do you try to find Aryl go to **20**.

3: If you have a sword go to **22**, otherwise turn to **94**.

4: If you are mounted go to **12**, if you are on foot turn to **34**.

5: Very brave! Add 2 to your luck - you swing into the window and land on the staircase, a torch is near you; taking it you survey your next problem, the descent and successful escape from the tower itself, go to **6**.

6: You walk a few more steps, and then light begins to fill the stairwell below, a couple more and another doorway is in front of you, three hideous humanoids sit around a table eating, drinking and playing a very noisy game of cards. Do you storm in like a hero of old, go to **89**. Or do you creep in like a thief (or a wise man) turn to **53**.

7: Your senses tell you that you are not alone - a head pops up from behind a suit of armour; you recognise Julian, one of your old servants. He looks relieved to see that it is you, and beckons you to him. Informing you it is dangerous to stay here he suggests that you follow him to the servants quarters; do you follow him **13**. or do you decide that it is too risky to stay in the castle any longer than necessary, turn to **102**.

8: Winding your way up the hill you see the woods ahead of you. Below, the road to the village curves away into the distance. Will you head into the woods, go to **81**, or will you descend to the road and ride for the village, turn to **79**.

9: The guard's sword is outstretched in his hand, test against your luck to see if your kick is accurate. If you are lucky, go to **103**. If you are unlucky turn to **70**.

10: The trolls are moving towards you now, being mounted you have an advantage add 1 to your combat skill:
1st Troll: *Skill:* 7; *Stamina:* 7.
2nd Troll: *Skill:* 6; *Stamina:* 8.
If you win go to **61**, if you fail turn to **24**.

11: The guard has the sword: do you lunge at him, turn to **28**. or do you give up, go to **35**.

12: You must fight the trolls, you are mounted so add 1 to your combat skill:
1st Troll: *Skill:* 7; *Stamina:* 7.
2nd Troll: *Skill:* 6; *Stamina:* 8.
If you win go to **61**, if you lose go to **24**.

13: You follow the old man through familiar passageways, down into the bowels of the castle. Julian unlocks a small door at the end of the kitchen and enters a room. The room has two beds, he offers you a seat and pours a glass of fine claret, and begins to recount the history of the past three years.

'Senskell began his regency well enough, little changed for

nearly a year, until reports of Barnak, the brigand chieftain began to filter through to the castle. Barnak's men had been raiding the borders of the kingdom, carrying off valuables, stealing cattle and kidnapping people for the slave trade. Senskell sent off patrols to curb the attacks - none came back, so he sent a messenger to Barnak to talk about a treaty. Barnak surprisingly agreed, so Senskell invited him to seal their pact with a feast at the castle. In the early hours of the morning whilst everyone slept off the excesses of the night before, Barnak's creatures crept into the castle, captured Senskell and slaughtered anyone who put up any resistance. Barnak has been in control ever since.'

Deciding that it would be impossible to face Barnak on your own, do you decide to escape through the secret passageways that Julian knows, go to **71**, or do you wish to take Aryl with you, escaping through the gate, turn to **40**.

14: The creatures lie dead, they will never finish their card game, pity, one of them had a good hand! Grabbing some food and thrusting it into a pouch you swig at a bottle of tepid wine and rush for the door, beginning your descent to the outside world, turn to **15**.

15: Looking quickly around the courtyard appears to be deserted, which way will you run? Straight for the gate, go to **49**. Towards the armoury to get a decent blade, turn to **66**. Head for the stables to find your steed Aryl, go to **17**.

16: Having attempted one of your options and considered it too dangerous, you decide to sleep on it and make up your mind tomorrow, go to **90**.

17: The stables are at the far end of the courtyard; running in short spurts, listening intently for the slightest noise, you hear the familiar sound of horses. With luck your steed Aryl will be there. Do you rush into the stable, go to **2**, or do you carefully enter the stables prepared for action, turn to **85**.

18: Grabbing a weapon, you feel that you are not are not alone; turning you see a shadowy figure in the room. Do you strike first and ask questions later, go to **59**, or do you stay your blow, turn to **72**.

19: Strangely the trolls do not move when you run, they seem only to be able to move within a limited area, lucky you!

You need a weapon, do you go to the armoury, turn to **43**, or do you run into the hut on your left, go to **63**.

20: The horses are obviously scared, they begin to quieten when they realise that you mean them no harm. Aryl is proudly tethered to the rear of the stalls, his forelegs rhythmically pounding with the pleasure of seeing you. Taking him gently by the muzzle you lead him to the courtyard. A yapping dog is bounding towards you. Do you mount Aryl now, go to **69**, or do you try to ward away the dog on foot, turn to **3**.

21: Gain two luck points. The trolls fade into the shadows behind you as you race across the drawbridge and up the hill in front of you. It is not too steep and you manage to travel a fair distance before stopping to regain your breath. As you rest you see a faint light off to your left,

USURPER

A Fighting Fantasy solo adventure by Jon Sutherland and Gareth Hill.

which appears to come from a hole in the ground. Since there is no immediate danger you go and investigate it, go to **88**.

22: The dog skids to a halt in front of you - it whelps as you swing your sword round to face it. Do you strike at the dog, go to **29**. or do you stamp your foot on the ground, turn to **42**.

23: Closing your eyes you jump, landing heavily on the staircase; there is a torch within reach, and holding it, as you get your breath back, you can see the stairwell disappearing below into the darkness, go to **87**.

24: Gradually the trolls force you into a corner, unexpectedly a blow from a club floors you. Blackness shrouds your mind; the hideous sight of a grimacing troll is the last thing you ever see. Your adventure is at an end; perhaps some other hero will deliver your people from this terror that has befallen them. Even the King, when he hears of your death, may shed a brief tear for you.

25: Like a great storm Ayrl thunders out of the darkness. In the distance strange loud curses ring out from the direction of the castle. Presently he is at your side and carefully you mount him. Do you head for the woods over the hill, go to **58**.Or do you ride towards the road, which is the quickest route to the nearest village, turn to **79**.

26: The two trolls turn, they have large clubs if you do not have a weapon, run to **19**; if you have, go to **4**.

27: The sword has struck you in the arm, lose 1 stamina . Do you decide to continue your attempt, go to **78**. Or do you give up, **35**.

28: The guard is rather unbalanced - you must test your luck, or you run the risk of being impaled on his outstretched sword. If you are lucky go to **27**. If you are unlucky turn to **84**.

29: The dog is within strike distance, you must fight it:
Dog: *Skill:* 4; *Stamina:* 5.
If you win go to **62**, if you lose turn to **44**.

30: There is no time to get to the sword before the guard rushes at you. Fighting him barehanded temporarily reduces your combat skill by 2.
Guard: *Skill:* 4; *Stamina:* 5.
If you win go to **50**, if you fail go to **68**.

31: Mounting Aryl quickly you spur him towards the gap between the trolls. Throw dice, if you throw an odd number go to **57**, if you throw an even turn to **12**.

32: You decide to jump; test your luck, if you are lucky go to **23**. Otherwise turn to **74**.

33: Spurring Aryl, you head towards the gate, two large grey-skinned warriors stand rigidly there. Test your luck to see if they have spotted you. If you succeed go to **98**, if you fail turn to **31**.

34: You must fight the trolls:
1st troll: *Skill:* 7; *Stamina:* 7.
2nd troll: *Skill:* 6; *Stamina:* 8.
if you win go to **65**, if you lose turn to **24**.

35: The guard snorts and turns; throwing your food and wine to the floor he retreats toward the trapdoor, lowers himself and disappears, the bolts reluctantly snap closed and you are alone again, go to **90**.

36: You hit the wall of the tower heavily and lose grip, mercifully death takes you before you hit the courtyard below. Unfortunately your adventure is over, hopefully some other hero will save your people and perhaps the King will remember you with fondness when he hears of your death.

37: The courtyard is still silent. You can make for the armoury, turn to **101**, or head toward the gate, turn to **86**.

38: Leading Aryl across the courtyard you see, dimly, two large figures in the flickering light of torches. Do you decide to mount Aryl, go to **33**, or do you approach the figures more closely, turn to **54**.

39: The frame offers little resistance to your blade and falls softly on the ground. Taking a torch you inspect your victim, recognising the corpse of one of your old servants and friends, Julian. Holding back your emotions you curse yourself, but still you are wary of your dangerous predicament. Do you walk back into the courtyard, go to **40**, or do you decide to use the tunnels under the castle and leave Aryl, go to **73**.

40: Standing rigidly at the gate are two large grey-skinned trolls, do you spur Aryl forward, go to **100**, or do you decide to fight them, turn to **10**.

41: Running outside you see a dog bounding towards you, teeth bared and barking loudly. If you have a sword go to **22**, if not turn to **94**.

42: The dog barks once, spins around and disappears yelping into the darkness, do you go back to the stables, go to **85**, or do you head for the gate, turn to **86**.

43: You run across the courtyard and into the armoury, if you have been there before go to **96**, if not, turn to **66**.

44: The dog leaps seizing your throat in a vice like grip. And quickly tears you to pieces. Your quest is at an end - perhaps some other hero may save your people, and maybe when the King hears of your death he will shed a tear for you.

45: The figures on the road are very close now, as you narrow the distance from them one shouts, 'Stop or we fire!' Do you pull Aryl to a halt, go to **83**, or do you steer him off the road, turn to **46**.

46: You duck as crossbow quarrels whizz past your head, Aryl taking you quickly out of their grasp, turn to **81**.

47: You hold the sword: with the power you feel having a blade in your hand after so long, your courage returns to you, add 1 to your luck, the guard is backing away, quickly you lunge at him and run him through. He falls kicking and screaming and you put your hand over his foul mouth to quieten his dying oaths when he is still you wipe the blade on his tunic and prepare to leave. First stage accomplished, now you must descend the stairs, go to **93**.

48: As the bedding runs out you realise that once you have secured the makeshift rope to the bedpost you will have barely 20 feet from which do dangle in the hope that there is a window below. Do you bravely begin the descent downwards, go to **56**, or do you think the venture too risky, turn to **16**.

49: There are two large shadows visible in the flickering torchlight, the drawbridge is down, do you rush around the corner towards the gatehouse, turn to **92**, or do you peek around the corner and get a better look at the opposition, go to **104**.

50: The guard lies dead at your feet its face looking even more hideous in death, you take his sword and climb through the trapdoor, turn to **93**.

51: Test your luck, if you succeed go to **5**, if you fail **36**.

52: Gain two luck points, the trolls are unable to react fast enough. Gradually the figures fade into the shadows as you thunder across the drawbridge. Riding fast you head up the hill ahead of you, go to **80**.

53: Test your luck to see if you can creep past the guards. If you succeed go to **64**, if you fail go to **99**..

54: As the two figures grow larger as you approach, they stir and head towards you, trolls. You must mount Aryl now, turn to **31**.

55: You have one chance, to cut Aryl's reins, test your luck, if you succeed go to **75**, if you fail turn to **77**.

56: Swinging precariously the cloth you see a window some 6 feet to your left. Do you attempt to swing over to the window, turn to **51**,or perhaps the idea of dangling from a rope isn't much fun and you decide to climb back up to the cell again, go to **16**.

57: Your horse collides with one of the trolls, knocking it over. Spurring Aryl again as he rears up in terror you speed across the drawbridge. Heading up the hill, at the top you dismount, seeing a light flickering to your left, go to **88**.

58: With your father's blade resting against your and Aryl gathering speed as he races along the rolling terrain, the woods loom closer and closer. Do you continue to head for the woods, go to **81**, or do you change direction and head for the nearest village via the road, turn to **79**.

59: The frame offers little resistance to your blade and falls softly to the ground - taking a torch you inspect your victim. The corpse is instantly recognisable as one of your old friends, Julian, a servant. Steeling your emotions you curse your impetuosity, but realise the danger that you are in. Taking a sword you return to the courtyard, but then you remember that there is a safer route out through the servants quarters; do you go back inside and seek a way though the subterranean reaches of the fortress, go to **73**. Or do you decide against leaving Aryl to his own devices and head back to collect him, run to **40**.

60: They cut you down with a flurry of blows, you obviously stayed too long in that cell, your swordsmanship is far too rusty. Your people will have to suffer under the yoke of oppression until another hero can emerge to take up the challenge to free them

61: You stand exhausted, the trolls lie still twitching in front of you. With horror you realise that the parts you've hacked off are gradually moving towards each other; in your panic you run blindly up the hill outside the castle, turn to **88**.

62: The dog lies dead at your feet, do you go back to the stables, go to **85**, or do you head for the gate turn to **86**.

64: In the creatures semi-drunken stupor they are blissfully unaware of your skulking progress, you laugh inwardly, thinking of their hides hanging up on the 'morrow when your escape is discovered. Crawling through the door and down the stairs you escape to the outside world, turn to **15**.

65: The trolls lie twitching in front of you, with horror you realise that the parts you hacked off are moving towards each other; in panic you run **88**.

66: Keeping to the shadows you move towards the armoury. There is no one in sight and the door is slightly ajar; looking in, the room is silent and deserted, two torches illuminating the ranks of armour and weaponry. Do you enter the room cautiously, go to **7**, or do you stride boldly over to the racks of weapons, turn to **76**.

67: As the sun dies and darkness begins to shroud the crude room in which you lie, you sit up and walk purposefully over to the trapdoor. Putting your ear to the ground you can hear the clanking of the guard's armour as he climbs the winding staircase from the guard-room below. Abruptly the bolts slide back from the trapdoor below you - a lighted crack appears, and sword first the guard emerges. Do you lunge at him, go to **28**. Do you try to kick the sword from his hand, turn to **9**. Or do you decide to do nothing, go to **16**.

68: Blackness surrounds you, the last moments of consciousness are consumed with your futile struggles as the guard begins throttling you. Death takes you, and your bid for freedom is over

69: As the dog gets close Aryl rears and plunges and the dog lies dead on the ground. Do you wish to head towards the gatehouse, go to **92**, if you think that you need a weapon, head for the armoury, **101**.

70: You miss and fall onto the ground, a snorting laugh comes from the guard and he moves menacingly toward you. Do you stand up and try to lunge at him, go to **28**, or do you you decide to give up, turn to **35**.

71: He leads you downwards; the air is musty and stale, cobwebs brush against your face and rats scuttle around your feet. Julian is silent, concentrating on the path ahead until gradually the descent becomes a climb. Julian tells you that you are now beyond the moat, there's an anteroom at the end of the tunnel. Inside, from a chest covered with a perished rug he produces a heavy bundle and placing it on the ground, unravels it, Lying there on the ground is your father's sword, missing now for many years.

'This is Stroma' announces Julian, handing it to you. With a feeling of pride you grasp the bejewelled hilt. Testing its balance it could have been forged for you. Strapping Stromax and the scabbard to your belt, with tears in your eyes you clasp the old man who also weeps.

Abruptly you turn about, and say, 'I will return.' Leaving the room, and lifting the trap door you see that you are at the bottom of a gentle slope some 200 yards from the castle.
Go to **97**.

72: Suddenly you recognise the shadowy figure. It is Julian an old friend and servant. Stepping out from behind a rack of weapons, he utters the word 'Master'?. He looks very relieved to see you and beckons you to follow him to the servants' quarters. He says that he has something that you will need. You refuse politely, saying that Aryl is tethered outside. He tells you to look for a light on the hill outside the gate, before disappearing again into the darkness. Stepping outside, do you mount Aryl immediately, go to **33**, or do you lead him across the courtyard towards the gatehouse, turn to **38**.

73: You remember the passages you used when exploring the castle in your youth. Walking through the servant's quarters, you enter the storeroom for the kitchens and open a door at the end of it. The air is musty and cobwebs brush against your face as you begin to descend. Presently as you trail your hand along the rough hewn wall you feel dampness, the moat must be above you by now. In the guttering flame of the torch you can see a room at the end of the passageway. Stepping inside, all that you can make out is a chest covered with a perished rug; pulling it off and opening the chest reveals a bundle. Taking it carefully out and unravelling the package there lies your father's blade Stroma; with pleasure and pride you strap the scabbard and sword to your belt. Brushing the cobwebs away from the exit, you lift the trapdoor finding yourself at the bottom of a gentle slope. Turn to **97**.

74: You fall like a stone, plummetting downwards, the force knocking you out. You are probably dead before you hit the ground. Unfortunately your adventure is over, hopefully some other hero will save your people.

75: Very lucky indeed, add 2 luck points. Spurring Aryl around go to **46**.

76: Suddenly a head pops up to your left, instinctively you grab a sword and rush to meet the threat; do you strike and ask questions later, go to **39** or do you stay your blows go to **82**.

77: Roughly they drag you from the saddle, one sticks his sword up to the hilt into Aryl's neck. Helplessly you struggle until the man holding you cuts your throat. Your adventure is over

78: The guard is off balance - a well aimed kick to the groin fells him, his sword falls to the ground. Go to **84**.

79: In a few seconds the steady clatter of Aryl's hooves tell you that you have reached the road. The panorama of the countryside is covered by the dense black cloak of night. Presently you hear the sound of men on the march in the distance, a light appearing in the darkness ahead. Do you continue along the road, go to **45**, or do you veer off the road and turn into the woods go to **81**.

80: As you ride up the hill you see a faint light off to your left, which appears to be coming from a hole in the ground. Do you dismount and investigate it, go to **88**, or do you ignore it and continue on your way, turn to **8**.

81: Aryl jumps gracefully over a fallen log. The pitch black of the woods is even in sharp contrast to the darkness of

the night. You realise that you will be safe until morning. Riding on for a few more yards, you stop and dismount. Gathering some leaves for a bed you fall into a fitfull sleep. This is end of the first part of your adventure.

82: In a flash you recognise the shadowy figure, it is Julian an old and trusted servant and friend. He looks relieved to see that it is you, and says that it is dangerous to tarry here. He beckons you to follow him to the servant's quarters; do you follow him, turn to **13,** or do you decide that it is too risky staying here in the castle any longer turn to **102.**

83: Quickly the men run towards you. Recognising you they grab hold of Aryl's reins; do you draw your sword, go to **55,** or do you surrender, turn to **77.**

84: The guard crumples under your onslaught (add 1 to luck) falling heavily to the ground - you freeze momentarily as you catch sight of his face in the part-opened visor. His face is hairy and deeply scarred, a pig-like snout protrudes from the helm. He begins to rise, his sword still on the floor. You must attempt to reach it before he does. Test your luck again; if you succeed go to **47,** if you fail go to **11.**

85: The horses are jittery, but quieten when they realise that you mean them no harm. Aryl is proudly tethered there, his forlegs rhythmically pounding the floor in his pleasure at seeing you. Taking him gently by the muzzle you lead him quietly out into the courtyard. Do you mount him now, **37,** or do you slowly lead him toward the armory, and tether him outside, **101** or do you lead him towards the gate, go to **86.**

86: Two very large grey-skinned trolls stand rigidly at the gate, test your luck to see if they have heard you. If you succeed go to **98,** if you fail turn to **31.**

87: Cautiously you descend the staircase, faintly you can hear a language unknown to you. Looking through the doorway in front of you, there are three hideous humanoids sitting around a table, eating, drinking and playing a very boisterous game of cards. Do you storm in, like a hero of old, go to **89,** or do you creep in like a coward (or a wise man) go to **53.**

88: Walking cautiously towards it you see a torch flickering below you. Lifting a trap door and easing yourself down you find yourself in a room. It is bare, save for a chest covered with a perished rug. Tearing it away, you open the chest finding a bundle inside. Opening it you see your father's blade, Stroma. Testing the sword its balance is perfect and you strap the scabbard to your belt, and sheathe the blade before climbing back into the darkness above. In a grim mood you walk to the top of the hill, go to **97.**

89: You rush in like a demon, the guards sit motionless for a second. You will have to fight them, if you have a sword use the normal combat skill, if you just have a torch reduce your combat skill by 1.
Guard 1: *Skill:* 3; *Stamina:* 6.
Guard 2: *Skill:* 5; *Stamina:* 4.
Guard 3: *Skill:* 4; *Stamina:* 4.
Their skills are obviously impaired by your surprise attack, and the effect of their drinking excesses.
If you win go to **14,** if you lose turn to **60.**

90: You feel weaker this morning lose 1 stamina, you have probably contracted something nasty from the food or the rank atmosphere of your cell. You stay in bed all day, plotting and thinking. What were those options again?
Overpower the guard go to **67.**
Knot together the bedding and swing out of the window, turn to **48.**
Prise up the floor boards and jump, go to **91.**
Time is running out, if you don't get a decent meal and a comfortable bed, you'll soon be fit for nothing.

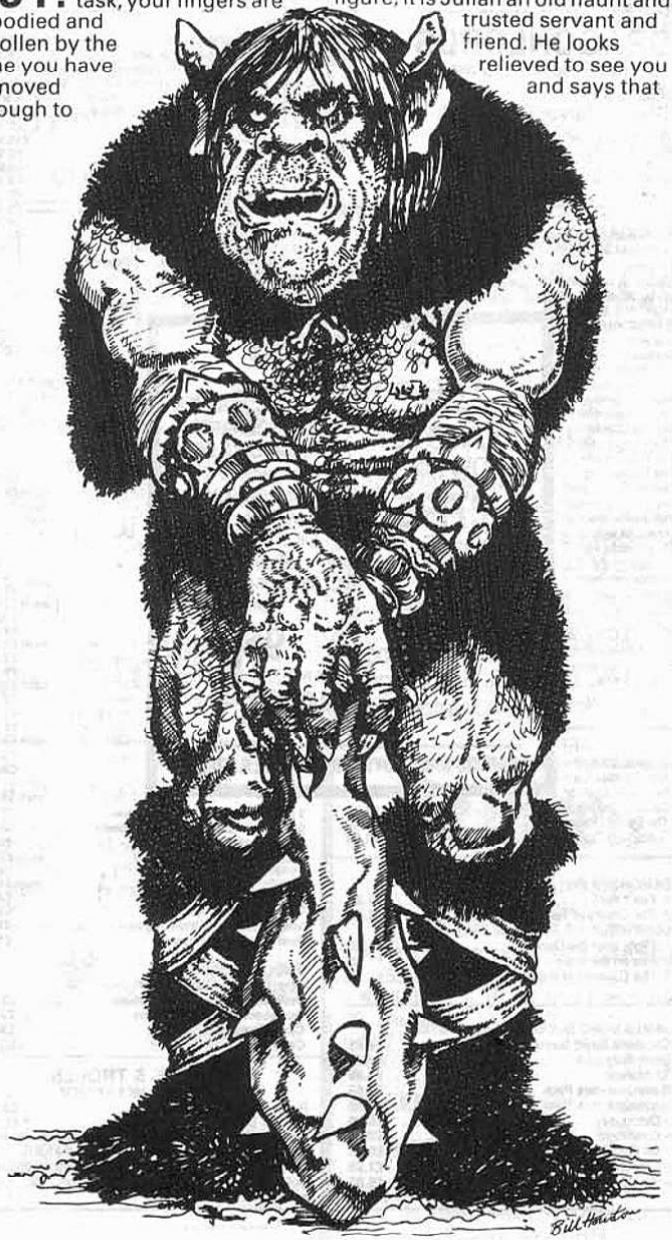
91: It is a very laborious task, your fingers are bloodied and swollen by the time you have removed enough to squeeze through; putting your head through the hole, you see a torch flickering some 10 feet below. Make up your mind whether to risk the jump or not. If you decide to jump go to **32.** If you consider it too dangerous, turn to **16.**

92: Two very large grey-skinned monsters stand rigidly at the gate, test your luck to see if they have seen or heard you, if you succeed go to **98,** if you fail go to **26.**

93: Tentatively you totter down to the first landing where you find a torch. Taking it in your other hand you continue the descent, go to **87.**

94: The dog leaps at you and you must fight it:
Dog: *Skill:* 4; *Stamina:* 5.
If you win go to **62,** if you lose turn to **44.**

95: As you enter the room, you sense that you are not alone. A head pops up from behind the suits of armour and utters one word, 'Master'. In a flash you recognise the shadowy figure, it is Julian an old haunt and trusted servant and friend. He looks relieved to see you and says that it is dangerous to stay here and you should follow him to the servant's quarters. You tell him that Aryl is outside, he says that you should look for light on the hill outside the castle gate, and that this will be a beacon for you to discover something that you will need. Julian disappears into the shadows. Do you mount Aryl immediately, go to **33,** or do you lead him across the courtyard towards the gatehouse, turn to **38.**



96: Grabbing a sword you emerge from the armoury once more. Do you head back towards the gatehouse, go to **12,** or do you go to the stables turn to **85.**

97: You realise that you need Aryl to be able to put some distance between you and the castle by daybreak. Putting two fingers in your mouth you emit a high-pitched whistle barely audible to the human ear, turn to **25.**

98: Add 1 to your luck. The two trolls are sluggish and startled, you can either rush past them before they can react, go to **100,** or you can choose to fight them, turn to **4.**

99: Clumsily you knock over empty flagon of wine, the creatures jump up startled and grab their weapons, with a shout they rush toward you, defence is your only chance, if you do not have a sword reduce your combat skill by 1.
Guard 1: *Skill:* 3; *Stamina:* 6.
Guard 2: *Skill:* 5; *Stamina:* 4.
Guard 3: *Skill:* 4; *Stamina:* 4.
If you win go to **14,** if you lose turn to **60.**

100: Stunned, the trolls are unable to react fast enough to stop you, contemptuously you spit on the ground as you rush past. If you are mounted on Aryl go to **52,** if you are on foot turn to **21.**

101: Tethering Aryl outside you enter the armoury, the room is silent and deserted. Two torches illuminate the ranks of armour and weapons. Do you enter the rooms cautiously, go to **95,** or do you stride over to the weapons, go to **18.**

102: Julian tells you that Senskel is a prisoner himself and that Barnak, the brigand chieftain, controls the countryside. Do you decide to leave the castle through the tunnels, go to **71** or do you wish to take Aryl with you go to **40.**

103: The sword arcs from the guard's hand and with a *clang* lands several feet away. Do you attempt to wrestle the guard to the floor, turn to **84.** Or do you want to make a grab for the sword before he does, **30.**

104: There are two large grey skinned monsters standing rigidly at the gate, do you wish to rush them, go to **98,** or do you decide that you should head for the stables, **17,** or do you go to the armoury, **66.**□

THE DARK USURPER

Part 2 of a Fighting Fantasy Solo Adventure by Jon Sutherland and Gareth Hill

In order to play this Fighting Fantasy *solo game, you will need to either know the rules or have access to a* Fighting Fantasy *game book. Also you require a pencil, rubber and two six-sided dice.*

INTRODUCTION

You are Corwin Calbraith, rightful heir to the Duchy of Skeln. You have returned home after three years fighting for the King, to find that Evald Senskell, your friend and regent, has been tricked by Barnak, the Dark Usurper, and now languishes in prison. You too were taken prisoner but managed to escape. The story begins again after your first night of freedom hidden in the forest near your castle. Now turn to **1**.

1: There is a silence - deep, solemn, silence - reigning in the depths of the forest. The sun shines in that full flood of glory that heralds the spring. Weary, hungry and cold you stretch slowly and deliberately, seemingly unaware of your regained freedom. Your horse, Aryl, has gone, lost in the night; you realise that you will probably never find him. Yesterday's events flood back into your mind: sooner or later Barnak's men will be combing the countryside for you. Will you head north, further into the forest, go to **81**, or will you head west and make for the road and the village beyond, turn to **88**.

2: The old man offers you a seat, and pours a glass of cider. Passing it to you, he begins to speak.

'I know of the creature Barnak, no doubt those creatures who treated me to their hospitality were in his pay. Fool that I am I fell asleep waiting for you. I knew that you would come, sooner or later.'

'How?' You interject.

'Stay your questions for a while, impetuous one', he replies. 'There is much I can teach you, Corwin, but sadly my strength is not what it was. I see that you have your father's blade, Stroma. I will trade you some of my skills for the green gem set in its pommel.'

Do you agree, go to **49**, or not, turn to **6**.

3: Two are armed with spears, one with a footman's mace.

1st Spearman: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:4.
2nd Spearman: *Skill*:6; *Stamina*:3.
Maceman: *Skill*:7; *Stamina*:4.

If you win go to **27**, if you lose turn to **82**.

4: The village is deserted, its entire population gone; Jorkell explains their absence.

'Barnak took most of the people from here as slaves as part of his tribute. Some say that his soldiers favour human flesh. They're gone anyway, the few that escaped are now in Kari.'

The sight of a trooper galloping towards you stops Jorkell continuing. 'Sire, the enemy are to the north-east, they have cut our lines of retreat to Kari.' Turn to **61**.

5: Bored, you search the woods, go to **28**.

6: 'I understand your reluctance but let me explain. Once most people of power held stones such as these, they are a symbol and a key, unlocking the subsconscious and allowing the inner power to flow. I have such a stone but its power is gone; if I have yours I can help you.' Do you change your mind, go to **49**, or walk out, turn to **90**.

7: Striding along behind the cats you hear a muffled scream directly in front of you. The cats quicken their pace. The trees open out into a clearing where you can see three figures standing over a fourth. The creatures are goblins and they are prodding a crouching man with their spears. The cats stop at the the clearing and turn to face you. You understand they want you to help, go to **60**.

8: You decide to seek out the old man. Walking to the forest you recall his name . . . Asmund, that's it. Struggling through the undergrowth you desperately try to keep track of the direction, go to **19**.

9: As you pass the overthrown roadblock a scout rushes back, waving his hands wildly. His horse skids to a halt in front of you; half shouting he exclaims, 'The enemy is between us and Kari, they are moving faster now.' Turn to **61**.

10: The cats guide you swiftly to Asmund's but the place is deserted. Will you wait, go to **68**, or search the surrounding forest for him, go to **28**.

11: As the boar gets closer you shout, 'Attack!' Instantly the cats spring at the boar, one seizing it by the leg, the other by the throat. Squealing and kicking the beast tumbles over - in a second it lies dead on the ground. The cats tear busily at the creature's flesh. Stooping you take out your knife and cut a chunk of meat off for later, turn to **71**.

12: A multitude of lights fall on your hand, a warm tingling sensation makes you smile as you turn to Asmund who is nodding his approval. 'This shows the power of patience, you now have the gift of Asmund's Floating Spheres: cast them at a foe, and stand well back. You have only enough for two such attacks.' Turn to **93**.

13: As you cut the man free from his bonds, the two pumas re-emerge and sit ten yards away, watching. Turn to **25**.

14: Crossing the road all seems silent, the village appears to be deserted. Test your luck, if you succeed go to **21**, if you fail turn to **50**.

15: Sauntering up to the gate the four guards scrabble for their weapons. Dumbfounded they are seemingly powerless to act as you walk straight past them and into the town, the pumas following. Walking along the main street people stop and stare. Suddenly they burst into cheers and the crowd surges towards you. Do you address them , go to **59**, or search for Jorkell, turn to **72**.

16: Quickly Jorkell commands the men to form up into two lines, a tactic favoured by the King, you recall, the first line hits the enemy, then the second impacts breaking them up. As one the soldiers raise a cheer and hurtle towards the enemy at break-neck pace, go to **62**.

17: The scout reports little enemy activity, he is still expecting men back from nearer the castle. You thank him and go to see Jorkell, turn to **95**.

18: Jorkell shakes his head and says, 'As you command, sire.' He gestures to the men to make way for the creatures. The goblins step tentatively out into the sunlight; they barely get a few yards before the crowd has torn them to pieces. 'It is the way, sire, the people have long endured their tyranny. Death or freedom, our resolve will determine that.' You nod and follow him to his quarters. Turn to **91**.

19: The undergrowth is getting thicker, you swing Stroma back and forth to make progress. Tiredness and hunger begin to slow you down. A familiar face catches your attention, it is Asmund, go to **70**.

20: Stroma flashes in the light of morning, the creatures do not stir, simply looking at you unafraid and without malice. Instinctively you realise that they mean you no harm. Your warrior sense does not allow you to sheathe your sword. The creatures sit up and turn heading north-east. Do you follow them, turn to **7**, or ignore them and go your own way, **69**.

21: Your sixth-sense tells you that you are not alone. From nowhere a crossbow bolt slams into the ground by your foot and you dive instinctively for cover. A voice booms out, 'Surrender or we will cut you down, dog!' Do you surrender, turn to **75**, or remain hidden, go to **40**.

22: The two pumas begin chewing on the boar's corpse. Taking out a knife you stoop and cut a hunk of meat for later, turn to **71**.

23: The squadron divides into two; you lead the left, Jorkell the right, each of you has twenty-five troopers. Spurring the horses you swing out and around the enemy, turn to **44**.

24: The sentry turns as you creep up behind him, there is no other choice but to silence him yourself.

Sentry: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:5.

If you win go to **67**, if you lose go to **82**.

25: 'What are you?' You demand.

'I am Asmund. It seems I am in your debt, Corwin.'

Do you wish to ask him how he knows your name, go to **64**. Do you wish to tell of your troubles, turn to **42**. Or do you ask him for sanctuary, go to **86**.

26: You enclose a faerie light with your fist, and tighten your grip; looking through your fingers you find it has gone. Do you try the same method again, go to **83**, or hold out your hand and concentrate, turn to **12**.

27: Stepping over the corpse, you see a man surrounded by bodies, wiping his axe on a dead man's tunic. Walking over to him, he greets you and says, 'Well fought. I am Berwin. These men once fought for Corwin, and now for Barnak.' He spits on the nearest corpse and looks at you with mad eyes. 'Who are you!' He demands.

'I am Corwin.' You reply.

'A damnable mess you've come home to; that fool Senskell let Barnak in so easily.'

'Senskell is a prisoner of Barnak. I will do what I must to save my people', you say confidently.

'One man is not enough - get yourself an army, then I'll fight for you. Farewell, Corwin.' With that he runs off. You decide that it would be safer now to head back to the forest, turn to **8**.

28: The thicket has been recently crushed to form a track, heading due east; you sense that Barnak must have captured Asmund. Cursing, you wish that you had taken Asmund with you. You mount your horse and ride back to Kari. Turn to **31**.

29: Riding westward along the road you could be forgiven for thinking that anything is wrong. As the Kari spur road meets the one leading to the castle the scouts rush back shouting 'Sire, there are creatures ahead, perhaps two hundred. They are moving slowly.' Jorkell turns to you for orders. Will you engage the enemy (you have fifty men with you), go to **61**, or will you head for the castle, go to **78**.

30: Producing the spheres you cast them at the uncoming boar. A huge detonation flashes on its head, the beast crashes to the floor, turn to **22**.

31: Kari is soon in sight, the pumas loping alongside your horse. As you enter the town, there is a feverish atmosphere in the air - people rushing about buildings defences, sharpening weapons and preparing for war. Do you ride straight for Jorkell, go to **95**, or find a scout to give you an update on the situation, turn to **17**.

32: Kicking the bodies over onto their backs is a grim business. Nevertheless you search the bodies: a handful of coins, and poor quality weapons is all you find. Will you head towards the village, go to **90**, or go deeper into the forest, **19**.

33: With the press of willing swords eager to slaughter the foe, you cannot even get a single blow in before it's all over. Jorkell holds aloft a head and says, 'Sire this will be our way, death or freedom, our swords will decide that.' You nod, and follow him to his quarters. Turn to **91**.

34: Pulling Stroma cleanly out of the scabbard you rush headlong into the clearing catching the goblins unawares. You must fight them:
1st Goblin: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:4.
2nd Goblin: *Skill*:4; *Stamina*:5.
3rd Goblin: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:3.
If you win, go to **65**, if you lose turn to **82**.

35: Walking a few steps you realise that the scene you have just witnessed is an anathema. Without further thought you draw Stroma and rush back into the clearing surprising the three goblins who you must now fight.
1st Goblin: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:4.
2nd Goblin: *Skill*:4; *Stamina*:5.
3rd Goblin: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:3.
If you win, go to **65**, if you lose turn to **82**.

36: The village is in sight off to the south-west, the road runs north/south, you must cross it. Test your luck, if you succeed go to **21**, if you fail turn to **50**.

37: A lone sentry stands by a watch tower overlooking the town. Test your luck, if you succeed go to **67**, if you fail turn to **24**.

38: As your force shows itself on the crest of the hill, the enemy scurry about to deploy. They form up shield to shield and begin their advance, turn to **52**.

39: The weight and force of the enemy was too much for your small force. Outnumbered you are dragged from your horse and killed. Hopefully some of your men escaped the slaughter but you will never know, your adventure is now over.

40: Rolling over you see a ditch a few yards away. Scrambling towards it you take cover. As you reach the ditch a man looms up, spear poised, ready to strike: you must fight.
Soldier: *Skill*:6; *Stamina*:3.
If you win go to **56**, if you lose turn to **82**.

41: Despite the fact that they still outnumber you, virtually as one they throw done their weapons and surrender. Will you slaughter them, go to **85**, or spare them, turn to **63**.

42: 'I know much of the past and I can see your future. Follow me now to my home, perhaps I can teach you things to help you survive.' Do you follow him, turn to **70**, or go your own way, turn to **89**.

43: From the mass of faces familiar features spring into focus, at least a dozen men from your old retinue are here. Clasping them one by one you then stride over to see Jorkell, go to **51**.

44: Not knowing which way to turn the goblins scuttle back and forth as your men cut into them from all sides. There are two hundred of the enemy. For each five of your troopers throw two dice, if any 1 is thrown it means a casualty for your side. Then times the first dice roll by the second and this is how many enemy are killed. Do the same for you and Jorkell. Continue this until you have either, been killed or wiped out, go to **39**, or the enemy has been reduced to 125, turn to **41** .

45: In the dim light of the hut, you notice scuff marks on the floor, and the study shows signs of a struggle. You realise that Barnak must have captured Asmund. Storming outside and mounting your horse you gallop back to Kari, turn to **31**.

46: You wake, the cats spring up ready for the off. Gathering your belongings and covering the ashes of your fire you head off towards the town. You walk for an hour or so, then the town is in sight, spread along the winding road in the distance. There are guards in familiar black uniforms standing at the gate - from here you can see at least four. Will you head straight for the gate, go to **15**, or scout around for another entrance, turn to **37**.

47: The two cats stare at you for a moment and then turn, walking side-by-side, north-east. Do you follow them, turn to **7**, or do you ignore them, go to **74**.

48: Riding on towards the castle, the road is still clear, ahead is an unmanned roadblock. Jorkell orders a detachment of men to clear the obstacle, and then you ride on. One last turn in the road and the castle is in sight sitting loftily on the base of the rising moutain range, the snow capped peaks still white with snow. Dismounting you survey the scene. You will need a great many more soldiers to take the castle than you have now. Will you head on back to Kari, go to **9**, or will you go and have a look at Skalah turn to to **4**.

49: You hand him the sword. Taking it and giving the jewel an expert twist he pulls the gem from its socket. Holding the crystal aloft light seems to spring to and from it. He takes his stick and attaches the gem to one end. 'Now,' he says, his voice strangely bolder, stronger and more firm, 'we can prepare for the business at hand. Sleep now and we will begin on the morrow.' He shows you to a bed and then ambles off. Lying down, you drift contentedly off to sleep. Turn to **58**.

50: A terrific force slams into your shoulder, knocking you down. A crossbow bolt is imbedded there up to its flight, lose 4 stamina. A voice booms out, 'Surrender now or we will cut you down, dog!' Do you surrender, go to **75**, or do you stay down, turn to **40**.

51: With the crowd close on your heels, you approach the block where a tall thin man with an unkempt wiry beard stands. He bows, saying, 'I am Jorkell, your servant, Corwin.' You hand him the fragment of Asmund's gem, he takes out a circular metal device, and places the stone in it, light flashes, and the people cheer again. 'At least here Barnak's sorcery is gone. Now we must destroy his creatures in the barracks. Will you accompany me?' Do you go, turn to **77**, or leave it to him, go to **94**.

52: The enemy is quickly upon you. For every five of your men, throw 1 die. Each 1 or 2 that is thrown means a casualty for your side, multiply the die roll by 4 and this is how many goblins have been killed. There are two hundred of them. Repeat the same procedure for yourself and Jorkell, a throw of a 1 means death, multiply yours or Jorkell's roll by 5 for enemy casualties. Continue until either of the following has happened: you are killed or your force has been wiped out, go to **39**, or the enemy has been reduced to 100, turn to **41**.

53: Riding at the head of your depleted force, with prisoners saved for interrogation, you decide that you must go to see Asmund for further advice. Bidding farewell to Jorkell and the soldiers you promise to be back within a couple of days, turn to **10**.

54: Walking for some minutes you sense a change in the cats - their ears are pricked up and they keep turning constantly to the north-east. Suddenly a wild boar crashes from the undergrowth, head down, and hurtling straight towards you. Will you set the cats on it, go to **11**. Use Asmund's Floating Spheres, turn to **30**, or face it yourself, go to **92**.

55: Presently you happen upon a clearing. In the centre stand three goblins prodding a bound man with the tips of their spears. Will you draw Stroma and charge, go to **34**, or will you circle around to get a better view, turn to **87**.

56: As three scramble down to meet you, a blood curdling scream rings out beyond them. Taking your chance you rush them, go to **3**.

57: A soldier rushes over to you and says, 'Sire, it is Jorkell - he lives!' You run over to a group of soldiers helping the battered man stand,
'You've not forgotten the lessons the king taught you then,' he croaks.
'No', you say with a smile. Rounding up the horses you ride off back towards Kari, turn to **53**.

58: Awakening, it would seem that sleep has recovered many of your ills: if you were injured before return all your abilities to normal. The old man is busy preparing a meal. After a wash and something to eat, you see lying on your bed a new set of clothes. A thin but strong surcoat, a long red cloak and a striped wolf-skin stole with two oddly fashioned shoulder guards. One bears the mythical war beast of Skeln, whilst the other bears the eye of fortune. Propped against the wall is an eight foot hunting lance and a shield with the mask of death emblazoned upon it.
'They have been crafted for you; they will be both your guardians and your mark. Come, I have a test for you', says Asmund.
Following him outside you find the air full of many shimmering lights. 'Take the lights from the air,' he says. Do you make a grab for the nearest one, go to **26**, or do you hold out your hand and concentrate, turn to **12**.

59: Half climbing, half hoisted onto a cart you stand erect and begin to address the crowd: 'I am Corwin, son of Cormac, rightful Duke of Skeln. The throne has been usurped, stolen by Barnak, the Dark Usuper! I need warriors who are willing to fight for freedom, but life can never be as it was. I pledge a new tomorrow, a new future for all, but we must act swiftly to destroy the creature that has destroyed so much that we love.'
The crowd raise a cheer as you step down. Do you look amongst the crowd for old comrades, go to **43**, or do you go to find Jorkell at the barracks, turn to **51**.

60: The goblins swing around to face you as you draw Stroma at the half run. You must now fight them.
1st Goblin: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:4.
2nd Goblin: *Skill*:4; *Stamina*:5.
3rd Goblin: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:3.
If you win go to **13**, if you lose turn to **82**.

61: Riding up to the crest of a hill you can see the oncoming mass of goblins. There are at least two hundred of them. You have fifty men, plus Jorkell. Which tactic will you employ? Headlong frontal charge, go to **16**, ride around and encircle the enemy, turn to **23**, or stand your ground and let them come to you go to **38**.

62: Terrified, the goblins realise if they stand they at least have a chance. The first line of horsemen hits buckling their line, the second impacts and drives deep into them. There are two hundred of them, for every five troopers throw two dice: for each 1 or 2 thrown you lose 1 man, then multiply the two dice scores by each other and that is how many goblins are killed; do the same thing for you and Jorkell, a 1 only means death. If you are killed or your force wiped out go to **39**, if the enemy are reduced to 100 or less go to **41**. Continue the action until you have a result.

63: Rounding them up you head back towards Kari, triumphant, the din of battle still ringing in your ears. If Jorkell was a casualty, test your luck, if you succeed go to **79**, if you fail turn to **57**. If he was not hit go to **53**.

64: 'I know many things Corwin, of your problems and how you may settle them. Will you come with me to my home.' Do you follow him, go to **70**, or do you decide to go your own way, turn to **89**.

65: The man crouches motionless, his eyes wide with appreciation. Bending down to cut him free, you see that his face is old and wrinkled. When the last knot is cut he staggers to his feet and walks over to his scattered possessions. Applying a small pinch of herbs to a bleeding wound, he emits a high pitched whistle, turn to **84**.

66: Your hunch was right, the village is now in sight. Do you continue straight towards it, go to **14**, or do you scout around to the north-west, turn to **36**.

67: The man sinks to the ground, your knockout blow has stunned him. The walls of the city are too high to climb so you must make your way through the city gate, go to **15**.

68: You sit at the table, sipping cider, you are content to wait for some hours. Test your luck, if you succeed go to **45**, if you fail turn to **5**.

69: You are quite lost, your aimless wanderings compounding your situation. Stopping for a moment you hear a scream off to the north. Do you go to investigate, **55**, or continue wandering around, turn to **88**.

70: 'Come,' says Asmund, turning about. The two cats spring up and follow him. He walks in silence, the pumas loping along beside him. It is an almost comical sight - a hunched man and two large feline predators. Still unsure you tag along, at a respectable distance. The old man leads you along paths known only to him, penetrating what looks like dead-ends. After a while you finally enter a small clearing with a solidly built wooden house dominating it. The old man enters, and you follow him in, go to **2**.

71: Very quickly you find that you are used to the pumas walking along beside you. Soon it is evening, a still, oppressive evening - the sun dying in the west, a succession of black thunder clouds rising higher and higher across the intense blue of the sky. Your resolve is strong. In the distance is a glow illuminating the scenery, it must be Kari. You decide to camp the night and continue in the morning, turn to **46**.

72: Asking a man for Jorkell, he points towards the barrack block beyond the low dwellings. Do you go there now, turn to **51**, or do you look amongst the crowd for some of your old warriors, turn to **43**.

73: Wishing you still had Aryl you mount a sturdy yet placid bay mare. You turn to survey the troop of soldiers that Jorkell has summoned. 'Sire would you like to investigate the situation to the west (**29**) or shall we ride towards the castle (**78**),' asks Jorkell.

74: The cats stop in their tracks, and stare at you. It is obvious that they will not leave you. You turn towards them and they leap up and run off with you in pursuit. As you crash through the undergrowth you see three figures standing over a fourth; you realise that you must save the man, go to **60**.

75: Standing up you cast Stroma to the floor. A dozen black clad men rush at you. Test your luck, if you fail turn to **76**, if you succeed go to **80**.

76: A small unshaven man levels his crossbow at you, squints and fires. You hit the ground with a *thud*, turn to **82**.

77: Stepping into the barracks you find a few frightened goblins ready to defend themselves. Do you choose to attack them, go to **33**, or spare them, turn to **18**.

78: The road ahead is clear, the scouts report the sighting of a large body of the enemy to the north-west. After fifteen minutes or so you reach the track leading to Skalah. Will you continue on towards the castle, go to **48**, or will you turn off and go to Skalah, turn to **4**.

79: Picking your way through the corpses, you stumble upon Jorkell. He appears to be dead, blood smeared across his face. Several goblins lie dead around him. Bending over him you detect slight breathing; propping him up, he splutters, wheezes then exhales: 'Sire, you are alive! All is still well.' Helping him on to a horse, you head back to Kari. Turn to **53**.

80: A blood curdling scream rings out beyond the men, they turn, and you grab your chance and Stroma, lifting the blade on high you scream back 'For Skeln!' and rush at the three nearest men, go to **3**.

81: Walking north nothing seems to disrupt the tranquility and atmosphere of the forest. Your slow progress belies the urgency and growing concern you have. Make a luck roll, if you succeed go to **55**, fail turn to **69**.

82: You die, struggling even as your life blood drains away. Your adventure is at an end.

83: The same thing happens, obviously there must be another way; holding your hand out and concentrating you turn to **12**.

84: The two pumas emerge from the thicket. You place your hand on Stroma, about to draw when a sharp command rings out from the man and the cats sit down some ten yards away. Turn to **25**.

85: The men do not have to be ordered twice and fall upon the helpless goblins and massacre them. If Jorkell was a casualty test your luck, if you succeed go to **79**, if you fail turn to **57**. If he was not hit go to **53**.

86: 'I have a safe place, and maybe some guidance for you.' Do you follow him, turn to **70**. Or do you decide to go your own way, go to **89**.

87: Creeping around the edge of the clearing, you can see that the man is wounded. Although he must be in great pain he only cries out when the goblins stab him again. He looks old with his grey beard, and non-descript clothes. The goblins chatter to each other in between stabbing the man. A pouch lies strewn on the forest floor, its contents scattered and discarded. Do you decide to attack now, go to **34**, or decide to leave the man to his fate, turn to **35**.

88: The calmness of the forest is broken by a padding sound behind you. Swinging around you find two large pumas staring at you, poised as if in mid-step. Do you draw your sword, go to **20**, or decide to wait, turn to **47**.

89: With reluctance in his voice, he says, 'Try to keep to the forest as far as you can, do not trust anyone, your destiny is in your own hands.' He turns and vanishes into the undergrowth, the cats have also gone. You are alone again with only the corpses of the goblins to keep you company. Will you head towards the village, go to **90**. Search the corpses, go to **32**. Or walk deeper into the forest, turn to **19**.

90: Walking vaguely west, the forest begins to thin, lengthening your strides you can see trees beyond the rolling hills. The village of Skalah is near. Racking your brains you remember that one of your old retinue lives there. Hopefully he will not have been taken yet. Do you head west, go to **66**, or north-west, turn to **36**.

91: 'I am Jorkell, garrison commander here at Kari and your servant, Corwin. The situation is grave; I can barely keep control here. Some may see my limited co-operation as treasonable, but I swear that I have only worked for him to prevent there being a permanent garrison of Barnak's men stationed here. Will you ride with me and I will show you the extent of Barnak's control.' Go to **73**.

92: The creature is almost on you as you swing Stroma to face it.
Wild Boar: *Skill*:5; *Stamina*:5.
If you win go to **22**, if you lose turn to **82**.

93: 'Good, you learn quickly. There is more but we have no time. I must tell you what you have to do. To the north is a town, go there and find a man called Jorkell, he will help you to defeat Barnak. Take with you this fragment of my own gem stone and my pumas, Melar and Thorkell; they will protect you and act as a sign for people to know that their freedom is near. For it is written:

When the fair headed man comes forth,
His garments red as blood,
His devices strange and wild cats for kin,
Smite shall he the beast, and we shall be free.

'That my friend is you, or what you will be when you have donned your new garb.' You put on the equipment and walk out with Asmund who leads you to the edge of the forest. He stops and points the way for you. Walking on for a hundred yards or so you turn, Melar and Thorkell by your side, your spear aloft. He signals back, raising his stick in the air, the green gem glowing. Sternly you turn again and walk on. Will you head due north, go to **71**, or will you go north-west, turn to **54**.

94: Jorkell shrugs, 'So be it,' and gestures to a few men in the crowd to follow him, there is a brief clatter of weapons and Jorkell re-emerges holding a creature's head in his hand. Throwing the head down he asks you to follow him to his quarters, turn to **91**.

95: Jorkell stands by a map of the area, studying it intently, spinning around he greets you, 'Sire I did not expect you back so soon.'

'Barnak has Asmund,' you explain. Jorkells face darkens, 'He moves very fast, Barnak must be frightened to take such risks.'

'Who is Asmund?'

'He is the last of his kin, a true wizard, if you like. I myself do not understand how he did not forsee this.'

'We must free him; to do that we must prepare for war. Do we have any allies left?'

'Yes, sire. Berwin has a group of plainsmen to the west; with volunteers and mercenaries we can raise nearly a thousand men.'

'Good, we must make our plans.'

Decide your strategy in the final part of Dark Usurper, to free Asmund and regain the throne of Skeln.□

THE DARK USURPER

Part 3 of a Fighting Fantasy Solo Adventure by Jon Sutherland with Gareth Hill

In order to play this Fighting Fantasy *solo game, you will need to either know the rules or have access to a* Fighting Fantasy *game book. Also you require a pencil, rubber and two six-sided dice.*

INTRODUCTION

You are Corwin Calbraith, rightful heir to the Duchy of Skeln. Having returned home from a Crusade to find that your friend and regent has been tricked by the brigand chieftain Barnak and imprisoned, you are captured and,after a daring escape, meet your loyal supporters Asmund and Jorkell. Whilst away fighting a foraging party of the enemy, Asmund is captured by agents of Barnak. Returning to Kari, your base of operations, you begin to decide a strategy to regain your throne. Now go to **1**.

1: By morning preparations are well under way; provisions have been brought in from the surrounding countryside together with all the local people. The defences show marked signs of improvement: secondary walls of stout timber have been thrown up to cover the weak points. In total you have six hundred able-bodied men. Mid-morning a scout reports that the enemy force is approaching. You must now chose your strategy. Will you sally forth and meet them in the field, turn to **20**, or will you remain in the town and prepare for their attack, go to **82**.

2: A group of burly orc soldiers grab you, forcing you to your knees. You hear the whistling of a blade as it slices into your neck. Your adventure and life ends here.

3: The enemy has fallen back to reform. Your officers organise the troops for another assault. Will you stand and defend, go to **29**, or charge the enemy, go to **46**.

4: Out of the corner of your eye you see a figure rushing past. In panic you scream, 'Evald, no!' Without warning, he hurtles towards Barnak yelling, 'Skeln! For Skeln!' Barnak sidesteps, whipping his sword from its scabbard. Arcing the blade down onto the oncoming Evald he easily drops him. Evald slumps to the ground, motionless. Barnak laughs, and shouts, 'And now you, little man. I should have destroyed you sooner – look upon this place, and prepare to meet your end!' What will you do now? The two surviving men have backed off leaving you alone to face him. Turn to **33**.

5: Looking away from the hideous sight, you see Asmund lying drugged in a cage behind you. Smashing the lock with Stroma you reach in and drag him out. He is barely conscious. Instinctively you touch his face with the pommel of your sword. Asmund blinks and groans. He is alive! If you have not searched for Evald go to **68**, if he is already dead turn to **79**.

6: Dozens of the young foe are scattered across the rolling countryside. You can afford to take no prisoners, and are content simply to take their weapons since they are no longer a threat. Turn to **18**. You send Berwin's force south to reconnoitre.

7: The enemy gives slightly as your impact is felt. Roll 2d6×10 for your casualties and 3d6×10 for the enemy. If your total force is now less than 400, go to **56**, if more go to **28**.

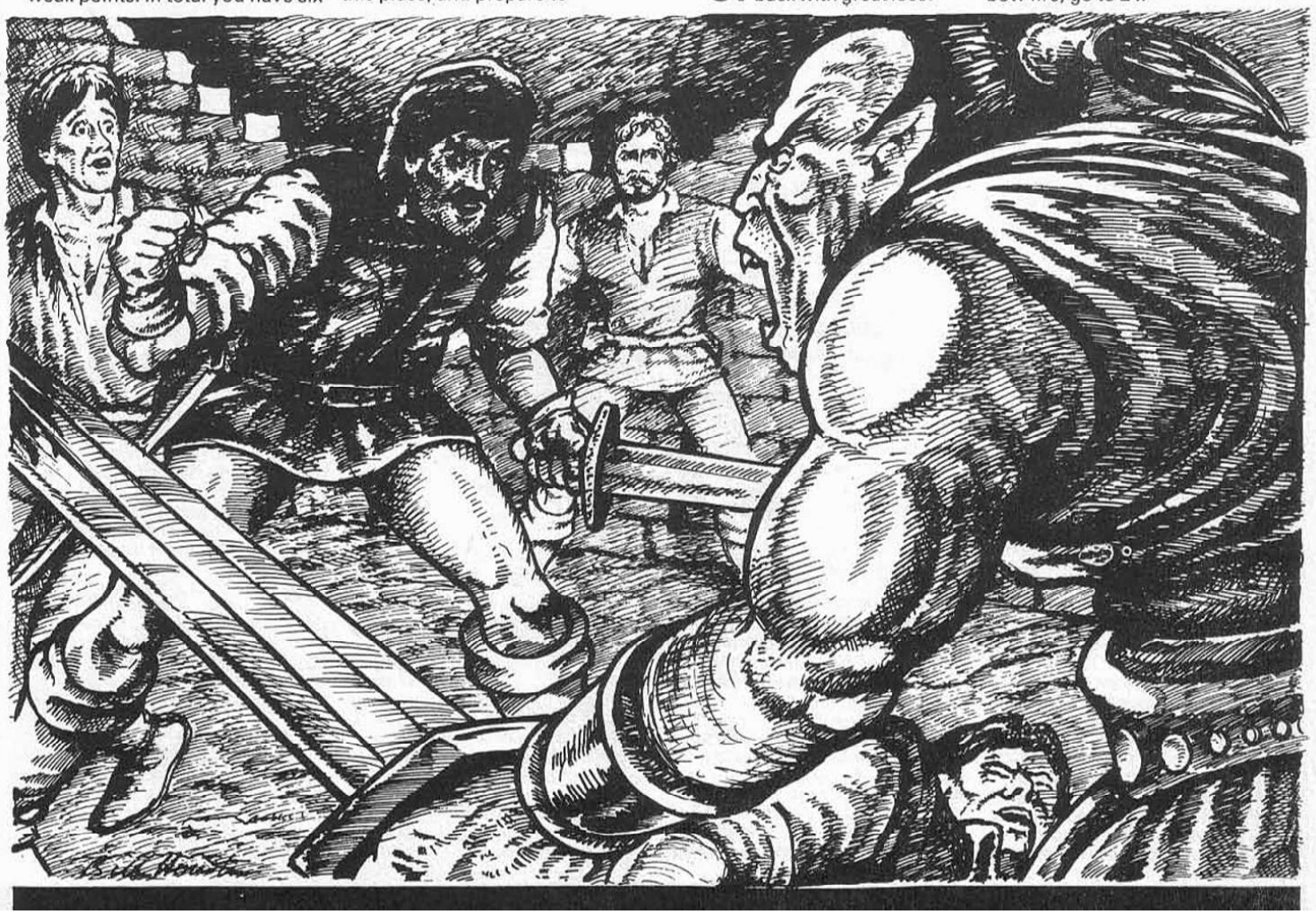
8: The enemy is driven back with great loss: will you counter-attack, go to **89**, or remain in the town and prepare for the next attack, turn to **86**.

9: The enemy barely arrive in time to meet the next assault. Roll 2d6×10 for your own casualties and 3d6×10 for the enemy. If their losses are geatest, go to **96**, otherwise go to **73**.

10: Evald, now fired with revenge, is able to walk without aid, although he is extremely weak. The occasional sounds of battle above have reached deafening proportions. Jorkell and Berwin must have breached the defences, and even now are fighting inside the castle. You sense that you must reach Barnak before anyone else does and head straight towards the hall.

11: Enemy morale is at breaking point, their charges and determination are waning fast. Roll 2d6×10 for your casualties, and 4d6×10 for the enemy. If you kill more go to **52**. If the enemy kills more of you go to **81**.

12: Enemy archers spot you creeping towards the tunnel. You lose two men from bow fire, go to **24**.



13: Scattered knots of retreating creatures disappear into the undergrowth. Wearily you shout praises to your men. Deciding that you must use the advantage of victory will you head for the castle, go to **70**, head for Berwin sending scouts ahead, go to **55**, or head for him with all your troops, turn to **97**.

14: Falling gradually back to the citadel, the enemy exacts a heavy toll on your men. Turn to **64**.

15: As you gallop forward, the enemy archers decide that discretion is the better part of valour and flee. Turn to **18**.

16: In your last moments a dark hooded figure looms into your sight, laughing loudly. Your final gasp brings a renewed hearty laugh; it is Barnak rejoicing in your failure. Cursing you slip into oblivion. This is the end of your adventure.

17: The enemy, now leaderless, pause momentarily in confusion. Then, as one, they cast their weapons to the ground. Your soldiers move swiftly to round them up. Will you order the slaughter of the prisoners, go to **73**, or will you order your men to expel them from the country, turn to **67**.

18: The castle is soon in sight, looming high above you. Berwin's troops are off to the west. You must now decide your strategy for the inevitable battle. Calling Jorkell and Berwin, you turn to **32**.

19: Springing into the saddle of a nearby steed, you spur the beast out of the seething mass of flesh. Reluctantly you leave your men to their own destiny realising that you will never regain your throne. You resolve to live the rest of your life a hermit hoping to attone for your desertion. Your adventure is now at an end.

20: Leaving a skeleton force to man the gates, you ride out at the head of your army. The broad banner of Skeln, entrusted to Jorkell, who with other newly made knights form a bodyguard around you, make up the vanguard of the column. Once past the cultivated land around the town, you soon sight the enemy, a solid phalanx of muscle and metal. Their rapid advance across the countryside is marked by plumes of rising smoke from the burning homesteads that laid in their path. With the aid of Jorkell you make a rough guess at their strength, at least 2000. Will you ride to engage the enemy, turn to **85**, or will you fall back to Kari, go to **90**.

21: Taking a set of keys from one of the corpses you open, in turn, the cell doors. The first holds three decomposing bodies, one you recognise as Julian, an old and trusted friend and servant at the castle. In the second cell lies a ragged body. As the door opens, the man's face turns towards you. Staring you recognise the now gaunt features of the once rather portly Evald. Weeping, he staggers towards you, barely able to stand. Clasping him in your hands, partly with happiness that he is still alive, and partly to stop his knees buckling, you exclaim, 'Thank the gods you are still alive'.

'Corwin I failed you miserably', he sobs. 'I should not have gone for so long.' 'Give me a blade, – at least I can serve you now'.

A soldier hands him a sword, and you help him out of the cell. Turn to **10**.

22: As you ride on, the body to the west is gaining on you, turn to **97**.

23: How many days will you besiege the castle? Two, go to **51**, or 4, turn to **69**.

24: The passageway is unguarded, it's doubtful that they even know of its existence. A few minutes halting progress brings you out into the deserted servants' quarters. Which will you do first, kill Barnak, go to **62**, free Asmund , turn to **74**, or seek the cell of Evald and free him, go to **93**.

25: Stroma seems to have improved in balance, the gem, pulsing with power, sends energy coursing through your veins. Barnak senses the change too, and backs away slightly. You must still fight him, but increase your skill by 3, and your stamina by 4.
Barnak: *Skill*:9; *Stamina*:10.
If you win go to **92**, if you lose turn to **41**.

26: Will you kick in the door of the hall, go to **77**, or will you wait and see what is happening, turn to **43**.

27: Bracing yourself you stand another charge. Roll 2d6×10 for your casualties, and 2d6×10 for your enemy. If your total force is less than 400, go to **56**, if more, turn to **28**.

28: Will you continue the fight, go to **3**, or will you fall back to the town, turn to **90**.

29: Sweeping forward once again, the enemy crash into the scattered groups of your men. Roll 2d6×10 for your casualties, and 2d6×10 for the enemy. If your force is now less than 400, go to **56**, if more, turn to **95**.

30: As you and your bodyguard break off from the column the enemy scatters. Lances at the ready, you systematically hunt down and slaughter them; many are not even armed, and their cries for mercy are unheard as you vent your anger upon them. Rejoining the column you go to **97**.

31: Deciding that the outer defences must be your first goal, you form the men up into ranks, holding the cavalry in reserve. A hundred trumpets sound from your lines, followed by a thunderous rush forward and a discharge of arrows, so thick, so close, that the very air is darkened. Gazing momentarily upon the scene with awe tinged with anxiety, you too hurtle toward the enemy defences. Roll 4d6×10 for your casualties. The enemy casualties are high, at least two hundred from missile fire and three hundred more at close quarters. Will you continue the assault, go to **40**, or will you call off the attack and change tactics, turn to **32**.

32: You agree that there are three different tactics to employ: will you assault the castle, go to **31**, attempt entry by subterfuge, go to **53**, or besiege the castle and starve them out, go to **23**.

33: Barnak, not suprisingly, is a very good swordsman. Unsure of how to tackle him, you make an ideas roll: if you throw a 1,2,3, go to **66**, if you throw 4,5,6 turn to **49**.

34: As you watch, trying to decide how to enter and reach Barnak before the guards cut you down, the roars of battle seem to be getting closer. Barnak is not in sight, the throne lies off to the end of the room. A loud gruff command emanates from the far side of the hall, and over half of the guards leave through the far door. You think that Berwin and Jorkell have breached the defences and even now are pouring into the inner bastions. Now is your chance, turn to **26**.

35: Dispatching one easily yourself before they could even turn, you witness a brief struggle; unfortunately two of your men are killed in the melee. All four jailers are dead, go to **21**.

36: Test your luck, if you succeed go to **19**, if you fail, turn to **91**.

37: With a quick roll of drums and a sharp blast of trumpets, every man springs from his posture of repose and gathers around their leaders. With the appearance of you, their leader, riding back and forth along the line it inspires courage and confidence. With a great roar and a surge forward your force breaks into a charge. Roll 2d6×10 for your casualties, and 4d6×10 for the enemy. Make a note of your casualties. Will you continue the battle, go to **83**, or will you fall back to the town, go to **90**.

38: Rapidly your troops dispatch the remnents of the enemy army; no quarter is given, all are slaughtered. Deciding you must use the advantage of victory do you head for the castle, go to **70**, towards Berwin, with scouts ahead, turn to **55**, or as a whole body for safety, turn to **97**.

39: Your constant urges for more effort gradually fall on dead ears. In terror and pain the defenders, outnumbered and wearied, begin throwing down their weapons. Will you surrender too, go to **2**, or will you fight on, turn to **36**.

40: Pressing on through the enemy dead you urge your troops onwards. Your casualties are 4d6×10, the enemy a further 400. If you have lost less than 300 in the two assault phases in total, the enemy are beginning to surrender, so turn to **53**. If you have lost over 300 in the assaults turn to **56**.

41: With a powerful upward swing Barnak blocks your attack. Twisting his blade under your upraised arm he skewers you. Gasping with the pain you fall to the floor, your head spinning. Half conscious you perceive the creature's grinning visage, laughing. You die, Barnak is victorious, although now that your men have penetrated the defences he will not live long.

42: You notice a gem on the statue standing by the door. Reaching in you prise it out of its mounting. It fits perfectly into Stroma's pommel, and with a scream you rush headlong towards Barnak. Turn to **25**.

43: A crouched shape sits in a cage, the beard betrays the occupant, it is Asmund, who really looks the worse for wear. Make an ideas roll (throw 1d6), if you throw 1,2,3, go to **54**, if you throw 4,5,6 turn to **42**.

44: Desperately and decisively you clear the enemy from the walls; some three hundred more now lie dead. Will you counterattack go to **96**. Or will you stand ready for another attack, go to **84**.

45: As your men organise themselves for the onslaught, the enemy rush nearer and nearer. Increasing their pace to a run, they finally to crash into your lines. Roll 2d6×10 for your casualties, and 3d6×10 for the enemy. Make a note of your casualties. Will you continue the battle, go to **83**, or will you fall back to the town go to **90**.

46: Unprepared for your swift counterattack, the enemy reel back for a moment, before regaining their wits. Roll 2d6×10 for your casualties, and 3d6×10 for the enemy casualties. If your force is now below 400 go to **5**, if more turn to **95**.

47: Gradually the enemy clears the walls of your troops before pouring in through the breaches. Will you throw in your last reserves, go to **9**. Or will you retreat to the citadel, turn to **64**.

48: Your expert marksmen are more than a match for the goblins whose short bows are out-distanced by your soldiers' long bows. After a few have been killed, they flee, go to **18**.

49: Scanning the room, you see Asmund lying drugged in a cage. Propped against the wall is his stick, your gem imbedded at the top. Rushing over you snatch the stick. Remembering vaguely how Asmund fitted the stone, you twist the gem out of its socket and refit it into Stroma. Barnak stands ready to fight you, turn to **25**.

50: Across the other side of the courtyard a tight knot of your soldiers is making for you. In the group are Jorkell and Berwin, cutting their way through the milling mass of enemy. Asmund appears at your side, followed by a great detonation ahead of you which hurls a dozen goblins into the air. Smiling you realise it is his sorcery. With the final block to their advance removed, Jorkell and Berwin join you. 'Barnak is dead.' you exclaim. Turn to **72**.

51: Despite the tight cordon around the castle, the enemy has obviously laid in sufficient reserves of food. You know from experience that the water supply is pure, drawn from deep wells safe from contamination. Will you continue the siege, go to **69**, or will you decide upon another tactic, turn to **32**.

52: The enemy is in rout; will you pursue, if so go to **63**, or will you stand turn to **94**.

53: You decide that you should enter by the tunnelway in the hill which links with the servant's quarters. Taking ten volunteers you direct Jorkell and Berwin to probe the defences for a weakeness. Test your luck, if you succeed go to **61**, if you fail go to **12**.

54: You cannot think of what to do, rather than wait for something to happen, you draw Stroma and scream 'Charge!', go to **77**.

55: The scouts report scattered enemy bands ahead, but they are offering no real threat. A group of forty or so goblins are ahead within charge distance, will you ride them down, go to **30**, or leave them, turn to **97**.

56: Gradually, sheer weight of numbers force your soldiers back, and almost as one they turn and flee. Test your luck, if you succeed go to **19**, if you fail turn to **91**.

57: Calling together a small band of exhausted followers you plunge into the enemy. Surrounded on all sides, massively outnumbered, your men are slaughtered, turn to **36**.

58: Silently you gesture to your men. Four creep out from the shadows and stalk the goblins, there is a brief flash of blades and the jailers lie dead on the flagstones. Turn to **21**.

59: The goblins lie dead around the hall; only two of your men are still standing. Barnak rises from his throne, his piercing yellow eyes glaring at you. Turn to **78**.

60: Drawing Stroma in midstep you close on Barnak. Grimly he faces you, the smile on his face gone and replaced with a cold determined stare. You must fight him. Barnak *Skill*:9; *Stamina*:10. If you win go to **92**, if you lose turn to **41**.

61: You successfully reach the entrance without being spotted, go to **24**.

62: Logically Barnak will have taken residence in the great hall. Carefully slipping in and out of the shadows you painstakingly head for the room. Everywhere has evidence of the pestilence brought by these creatures, decaying food, human carcasses, half devoured and an all pervading stench of decomposition and rot. Peering around the door of the hall you can see at least thirty guards. Turn to **34**.

63: Like devilish great scythes your ranks of troops reap a great slaughter upon the enemy. No quarter is given. Will you head for the castle, go to **70**. Or will you head for Berwin with scouts ahead, turn to **55**, or keep your force together and move to link up with Berwin, go to **97**.

64: Test your luck if you succeed go to **80**, if you fail go to **39**.

65: As Berwin heads off you ride on in a south-easterly direction. Ahead lies an outcrop of rocks. Scurrying back and forth are a few dozen enemy archers. Will you charge them, go to **15**. Or will you send skirmishers forward to trade shots, turn to **48**.

66: Unable to think of anything as your mind is consumed with revenge, you launch yourself at Barnak, go to **60**.

67: Forming the prisoners into a column you charge one of the captains to escort the creatures to the border; this done your mind must focus on the future, turn to **98**.

68: Remembering what the sentry had said you rush down the steps. The dungeons are deserted, all have fled. Peering through the spy-hole of the first cell you can see a slumped figure lying there. Testing the door you find it unlocked. You step in and crouch by the body. A pool of blood covers the floor by the still warm corpse. Turning it over to your horror it is Evald. You curse yourself for not having come to rescue him earlier. The sound of clashing blades is close now. Spinning round you leave the cell and rush up the corridor towards the noise, turn to **79**.

69: By the fourth day, great foul funeral pyres are burning within the castle; enemy casualties through plague will increase each day, and even now the enemy are beginning to surrender in small groups. Taking the opportunity of the confusion you turn to **53**.

70: Riding at the head of your depleted yet victorious troops, you ride south towards your castle. A scout reports a large body of men moving towards you from the west. Will you investigate, go to **97**, or will you ignore it and continue on southwards, turn to **22**.

71: The enemy surrounds the city, but seems to be concentrating on the east side, what will you do? Not reinforce, go to **73**, reinforce with 50 men, turn to **47**, or reinforce with 100 men, go to **8**.

72: The fighting is gradually subsiding, the enemy are throwing down their weapons. Still small groups of resistance hold out. At the top of your voice you shout, 'Barnak is dead'. Turn to **17**.

73: Bearing down on the under-manned walls the enemy pour through the gaps in the defence. Cursing your bad judgement, you signal the retreat. With the citadel secure you have barely 400 men left. Will you sally out, go to **57**, or will you stand and defend your last refuge, turn to **64**.

74: You realise that you could search the castle for some time before finding Asmund, and that you are more likely to run into some guards first. Will you try and capture a prisoner, go to **76**, or do you decide he must be with Barnak, turn to **62**.

75: Steeling yourself and taking responsibility for the decision you preside over the executions. Huge burial pits are dug and the bodies cast into them. No exceptions are made – all are slain. Sickened you must look to the future, go to **98**.

76: Conveniently as you turn the corner you see a sleeping guard propped up in a chair. Rushing forward you place Stroma at his throat and kick him He blinks, an expression of terror on his face, and swallows.

'Where is the creature Barnak?' you demand.' Sputtering, he answers:

'The main hall'.

'Evald, my regent?'

'In the dungeons.'

'And Asmund, the magician?'

'Barnak has him caged in the hall.'

Satisfied with his answers you dispatch him painlessly. Will you go to free Evald, turn to **93**, or will you go now to the main hall, turn to **62**.

77: There are only twelve guards, your men will fight one each day. If you have Evald with you, he too will fight one. You must take care of the remainder. Turn to **87**.

78: Is Evald with you? If yes go to **4**, or if not turn to **33**.

79: Emerging from the building you enter the courtyard, men and creatures are everywhere, locked in mortal combat. Bodies lie scattered around, the dead and dying trampled by the constant movement of battle. Your troops appear to be winning. Will you shout out that Barnak is dead, go to **72**, or will you join in the fight, turn to **50**.

80: Thankfully the troop's morale is still sound. The enemy readies itself for another assault. Throw 2d6×10 for your casualties and 3d6×10 for enemy casualties. If the enemy loses more go to **11**. If the enemy loses less than you turn to **81**.

81: With an unexpected determined rush the enemy gain a foothold in the citadel. Chaos reigns and there is much slaughter on both sides. Your troops are little by little giving ground. Caught in the retreat, turn to **36**.

82: From your vantage point of the tower you can see the enemy advancing. Onward like a mighty river, rolls Barnak's force; a solid phalanx of muscle and metal, wagons heavily laden – all can be clearly distinguished in their rapid advance toward Kari. Marking their path into the distance is the rising smoke of the hamlets and farms already burning. With the aid of Jorkell you make a rough estimate of the foe, at least 2,000 in sight already. Turn to **90**.

83: With smothered cries, bursting groans and, wild piercing screams from dying horses your troops ably fight on . Will you stand and defend, go to **27**, or will you gather your men for a countercharge, turn to **7**.

84: The foe gathers itself for one last assault. Roll 2d6×10 for your own casualties and 4d6×10 for the enemy. If you kill more, go to **96**, if you kill less, turn to **73**.

85: Aware of the great disparity of numbers, you examine the ground anxiously to find the best spot to fight the enemy. Will you stand and defend, go to **45**. Or will you charge the enemy before they can organise themselves, turn to **37**.

86: The enemy is now concentrating against the north wall. Will you disregard this move, go to **73**, reinforce with 50 men, turn to **44**, or reinforce with 100 men, go to **96**.

87: All the goblins will have the same abilities. Goblin: *Skill*:6; *Stamina*:5. If you win go to **59**, if you lose go to **16**.

88: Berwin dismounts and bows before you. Gesturing to him you greet your ally. With a grim expression he says, 'Sire, I have but encountered only light opposition, many mayhap were fleeing from you. I can account for only some 400 creatures, most must still be in the castle'.

You tell him of the victory and together you must have eliminated nearly 2500 of the foe. Jorkell joins you, a plan must be agreed, but the final choice must be yours. Will you ride towards the castle as one force, go to **6**, or will you send Berwin off to approach from the west, turn to **65**.

89: Some five hundred lie dead heaped on and below the ramparts. Scrambling into order you lead your men onwards into the milling mass of the disorganised foe. Throw 2d6×10 for your casualties, and 4d6×10 for the enemy. If you have killed more go to **52**, if they kill more turn to **14**.

90: Movement now pervades every part of the town: the walls are manned and each section has been placed under the command of an experienced officer. Accompanied by Jorkell you visit every part of the town, reassuring doubters, rousing the timid, cheering and inspiring the boldest with a new confidence – new hopes, but one feeling always predominating: liberty and Skeln, the watchwords for all. Some four hundred men cover the walls whilst you hold 200 for reinforcement. Below there is a sudden surge of activity – the enemy is about to attack. Returning to your command post, go to **71**.

91: 'Yield or you die!' A creature screams as you plunge yourself at it. As you struggle with the beast a sickening sense of utter exhaustion seizes your body – you are powerless to stop a flurry of blows penetrating your armour. You lie dead, your adventure is now over.

92: Barnak's foul body twitches and slumps as you pull Stroma from his body. The stench of death hangs heavily in the air. Unconsciously you kick the corpse and Barnak's dead eyes stare back at you. With a shiver running through your body, turn to **5**.

93: You think that the logical place would be in the dungeons beyond the servants quarters. Knowing your way around the castle you use the deep shadows and recesses to avoid the occasional group of goblins. Everywhere has the stench of decay; bodies lie here and there, evidence of the creatures' eating habits. Turning the corner you can finally see the cells: sitting around bickering are four guards. Will you attack them, go to **35**, or will you try subterfuge, turn to **58**.

94: As you ready yourself for the next attack, the enemy force simply seems to melt away. Larger and larger groups run off into the distance and with a great sense of achievement you decide to press the advantage. Will you head for the castle, go to **70**. Or will you head towards Berwin with scouts ahead, go to **55**, or will you keep your troops together for safety and head westwards in search of Berwin, go to **97**.

95: Enemy dead litter the field, their bodies hampering their own advance, cutting deep into the flanks of the front lines of their spearsmen, you see that they are beginning to run. Will you pursue, go to **38**, or will you stand and reorganise, go to **13**.

96: The last combat has finally broken the enemy, many perish in the stampede to escape your death – dealing strokes. Will you pursue the broken enemy, go to **63**, or will you stay within the walls, go to **94**.

97: As you near the crest of the hill before you, a compact column of foot and mounted men appear, you recognise the banner of Skeln instantly: it is Berwin with the much needed reserves. He rides ahead with fifty or so knights, following them a mass of foot spearsmen, some three hundred strong. Breaking free from the column you spur your horse to greet him, turn to **88**.

98: Over the next few days you lock yourself away deciding what you must do now. Calling a full meeting of your followers, you decide to make Jorkell and Berwin joint heads of your army, Asmund your advisor and teacher. Confidently you decree never to abandon your lands again. Once more you are the true Duke of Skeln; providence has smiled upon you this time, and your struggle to regain your country is now completed. □